

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 03566 070304Z

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3378

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T OTTAWA 03566

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT LIMIT DISTRIBUTION TO VICE PRESIDENT, ACTING
SECRETARY, WHITE HOUSE/SCHLESINGER, EB/KATZ, EUR/VINE;
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AND HUNTER, EUR/HARTMAN

E.O. 11651: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, SENV, CA

SUBJECT: BERGER COMMISSION RECOMMENDS AGAINST PRUDHOE
BAY/MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE

1. CANADIANS HAVE GIVEN ME ADVANCE LOOK AT CONCLUSIONS
OF BERGER COMMISSION REPORT ON MACKENZIE VALLEY GAS PIPE-
LINE. REPORT IS TO BE MADE PUBLIC AFTERNOON MAY 9. GOC
ASKS WE PROTECT INFORMATION ABSOLUTELY UNTIL THEN.

2. BERGER CONCLUDES THAT NO PIPELINE SHOULD BE BUILT AT
ALL ACROSS NORTHERN YUKON, AND THAT NO PIPELINE SHOULD BE
BUILT DOWN MACKENZIE VALLEY BEFORE TEN YEARS, TO ALLOW
TIME FOR NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW
INSTITUTIONS BASED ON SETTLEMENT.

3. WITHOUT EXPRESSING IT THAT WAY, BERGER THUS ALIGNS
HIMSELF SQUARELY AGAINST TRANSPORT OF U.S. GAS ACROSS
NORTHERN YUKON AND DOWN THE MACKENZIE VALLEY, ON ANY TERMS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 OTTAWA 03566 070304Z

AND CONDITIONS.

4. BERGER EXPRESSES VIEW THAT SOUTHERN YUKON ROUTE ALONG
ALCAN HIGHWAY POSES FEWER PROBLEMS, BUT SAYS HE CANNOT
ENDORSE IT PENDING CURRENT ENVIRONNENT AND NATIVE CLAIMS
INQUIRY.

5. REPORT WILL RECEIVE MASSIVE CANADA-WIDE COVERAGE ON RELEASE. GOVERNMENT LINE WILL BE THAT (A) IT CAN TAKE NO SUBSTANTIVE POSITION UNTIL NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD REPORTS IN JULY; (B) REPORT WILL BE GIVEN "MOST CAREFUL AND SERIOUS EXAMINATION"; AND (C) THAT REPORT WILL BE A MAJOR INPUT INTO ITS STATEMENT OF POLICY TO BE ISSUED THIS SUMMER ON NATIVE CLAIMS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH.

6. COMMENT: BERGER'S CONCLUSIONS ARE ABOUT AS EXPECTED ON DELAYING A MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE. HOWEVER, HIS RECOMMENDATION THAT NO PIPELINE AT ALL BE BUILT ACROSS NORTHERN YUKON IS A MAJOR BLOW TO THE ARCTIC GAS PROPOSAL FOR TRANSPORTING PRUDHOE BAY GAS TO THE MACKENZIE AND THE BUILDING OF A JOINT PIPELINE TO THE SOUTH. REPORT IS DRAFTED IN JUDICIOUS AND BALANCED LANGUAGE, AND WILL INEVITABLY HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE THROUGH COUNTRY.

7. HOWEVER, IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR SOME TIME TO ASSESS WHETHER IT EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATES THE MACKENZIE VALLEY ROUTE OR NOT. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER GOC CAN PREVENT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE FROM DEVELOPING IMMEDIATELY. ENDERS

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